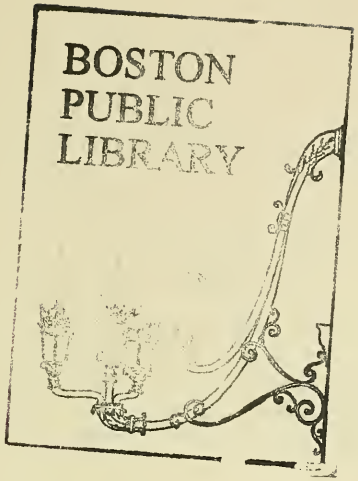
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FOR
COMMUNITY REVIEW



BACK BAY - BEACON HILL

Background Information, Planning Issues and Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City Of Boston
Boston Redevelopment Authority
District Planning Program

June 1975

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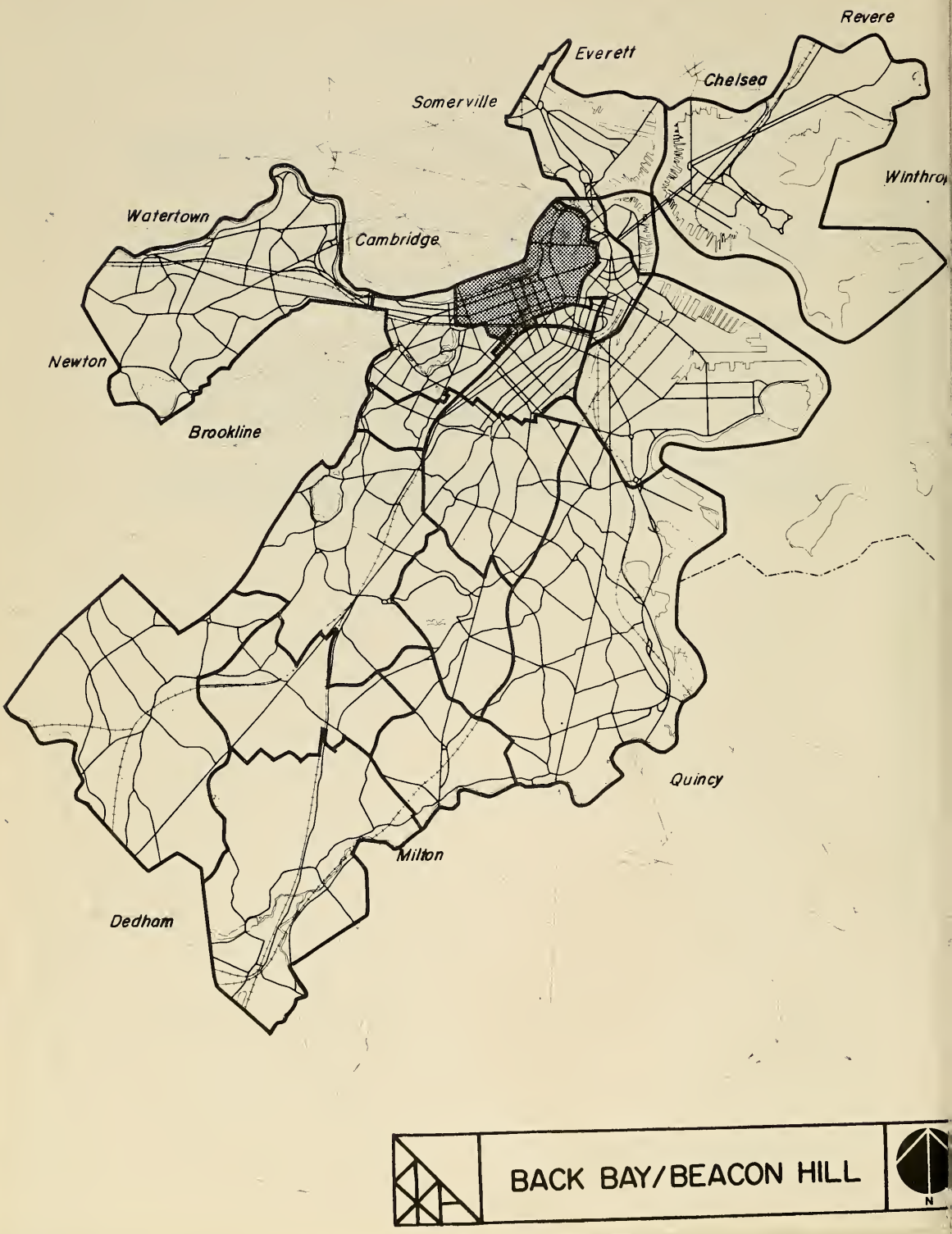
INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District Planner, is a draft document intended to form the basis of discussion among residents and city representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report establishes a base of population, income and housing data and provides information on recent past public and private investment in Back Bay-Beacon Hill. This material can be used by the district planner and others involved in the planning process, including neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other city agencies and departments.

An analysis of the major issues confronting the district is also offered here, together with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis for community discussions in the Community Development Block Grant and capital improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or wholly funded state programs.

The report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.


Revere
Everett
Chelsea
Somerville
Winthrop
Watertown
Cambridge
Newton
Brookline
Quincy
Milton
Dedham
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
N

A. SHORT HISTORY

The Back Bay-Beacon Hill District consists of two historically and architecturally distinct residential neighborhoods whose viability today results in large part from a history of sound planning, adaptability to change, and well-organized community groups.

Beacon Hill

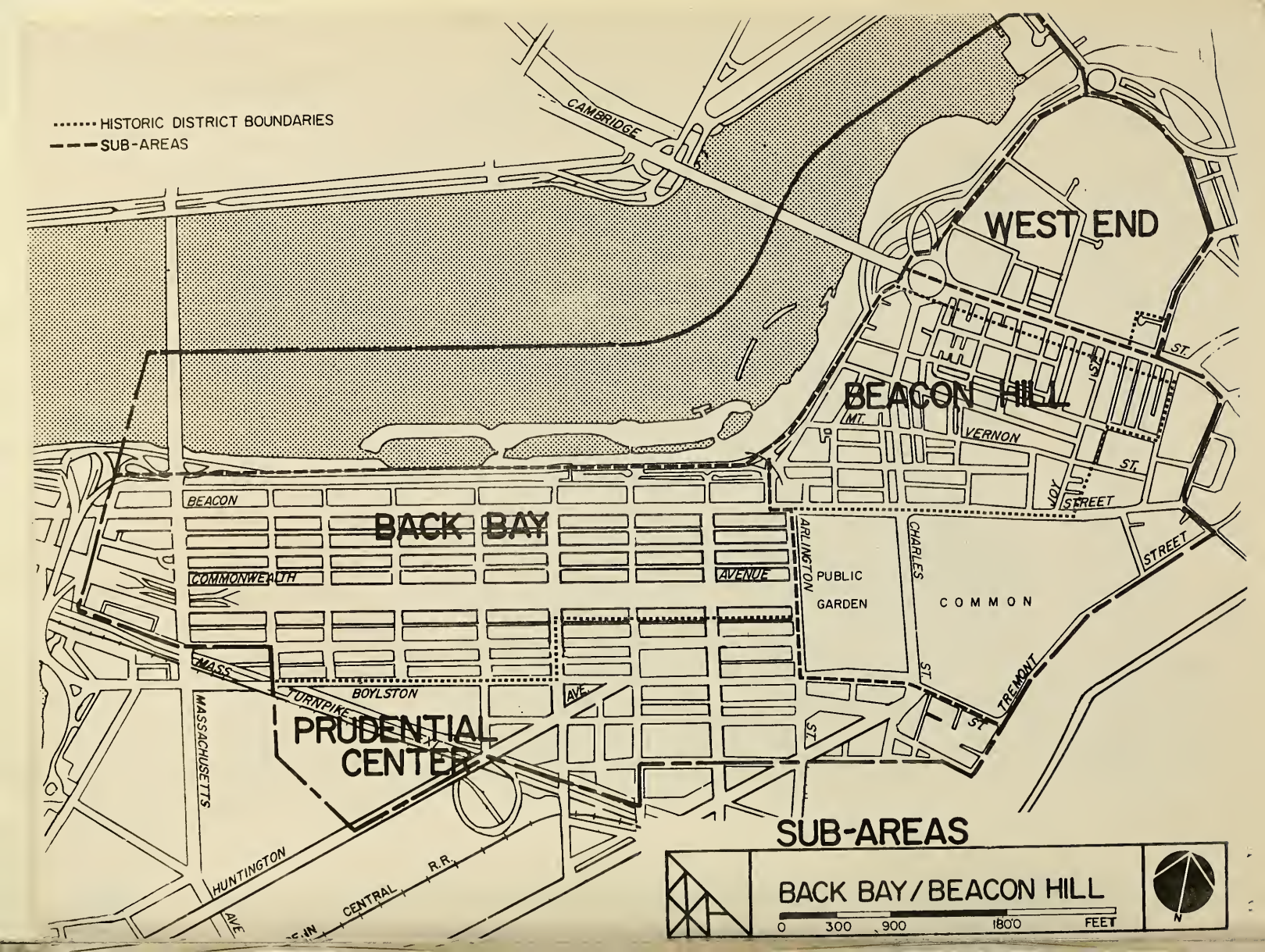
The Hill was originally known as Trimountain but its three peaks were soon cut down to make building possible and start the filling of the Boston shore and river lines. The Hill takes its name from its central peak where a warning beacon stood to protect the colony from Indians and foreign invaders.

The modern history of the Hill started with the building of the new State House near where the old beacon had stood. The south slope, with its views of both the Common and the Charles River, made an ideal location for the fine homes which were in demand in prosperous, post-revolutionary Boston. A syndicate known as the Mt. Vernon Proprietors purchased some 20 acres and laid out Louisburg Square and a grid pattern of streets. They established broad setbacks on Mt. Vernon Street and imposed various deed restrictions so that only brick or stone residences could be built Only three streets extended all the way across the Hill: Charles, Mt. Vernon and Joy.

The less desirable north slope was set apart from the south by two long blocks on the north side of Pinckney Street. Development there took place in a much less coherent pattern. At the end of the 18th century, the north slope had three distinct subareas: a section of stately Bulfinch houses around Bowdoin Square, a redlight district near the river, and the first substantial Black neighborhood in Boston between Joy and Phillips Streets. Various events -- the development of the State House, the opening of the West Boston Bridge across the Charles River, the establishment of Massachusetts General Hospital, the settling of the Back Bay and South End -- led to the rise and fall of the north slope. Wooden and brick houses were built in the first half of the nineteenth century and tenements in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The same fate of changing land use on the edges of the district affected, although to a lesser extent, the south slope. The Back Bay caught the fancy of affluent old families and newly rich alike after the Civil War, and some of the south slope fell into decline. A hard core of old Beacon Hill families never left for the more fashionable Back Bay or the suburbs, however, so this threat of change was held to north of Pinckney Street.

The Beacon Hill Civic Association, founded in 1922 rallied strong community feeling for the Hill. Private capital steadily improved property, and the concerted efforts of the BHCA secured zoning


HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
SUB-AREAS
CAMBRIDGE
WEST END
BEACON HILL
MT. VERNON ST.
BEACON
BACK BAY
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
ARLINGTON ST.
PUBLIC GARDEN
CHARLES ST.
COMMON
TREMONT STREET
MASS. TURNPIKE
BOYLSTON ST.
PRUDENTIAL CENTER
MASSACHUSETTS AVE.
HUNTINGTON AVE.
CENTRAL R.R.
SUB-AREAS
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
0 300 900 1800 FEET
N

protection and resisted encroachment. Popularity and prices soared in the 20's; prices slumped but popularity only fell off slightly in the depressed 30's. After World War II, as more and more young families remained or came to the Hill, values rose again.

The establishment of the Beacon Hill Historic District with architectural controls in 1955 was a significant factor in the continued improvement of the area. In 1958 the law was strengthened to include the control of the demolition of dwelling units and interior color, and the historic district was extended to include Lower Beacon Hill, between Charles Street and the Charles River Basin. In 1963 the historic district was extended again to within 40 feet of Cambridge Street and east to Bowdoin Street. The 1964 Boston Zoning Code zoned all of the Beacon Hill to a floor area ratio of two with an overall height limit of 65 feet for general residential use except for Charles and Cambridge Streets, which remain for local business.

The most dramatic chapter of modern history in Beacon Hill concerns the Charles River Development. In January 1958, a 47.1-acre parcel bounded by Cambridge, Blossom, Allen, Charles, Lowell and Stamford Streets was designated for renewal. This area, the former West End, was a low- and moderate-income residential community. A great deal of controversy accompanied the relocation of the residences and businesses to provide a cleared redevelopment site. The development of residential, commercial, office and parking uses has proceeded in stages at a total cost of $11.7 million in federal project capital grants and $5.9 million of city investment.

Back Bay

The Back Bay was orignally a broad, shallow body of water separating Boston from Brookline and bordering the narrow neck of land access to Roxbury in the vicinity of the present South End. Until the creation of the Public Garden, the marshes of the Back Bay reached Boston Common.

Development of the Back Bay began in 1814 when the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation proposed a scheme to harness its tidal flow for commercial purposes. A granite-faced mill dam completed in 1821 stretched across the bay from Charles Street to Sewall's Point (now Kenmore Square) along a route corresponding to the present Beacon Street. A shorter cross-dam intersected the mill dam and divided the Back Bay into full and receiving basins. The project, however, was soon forced to compete with steam powered manufacturing and never became the financial success envisioned by its promoters. Railroad lines built on trestles across the dammed basins in the 1830's further frustrated industrial development by impeding the flow of water in the bay.

By 1840, stagnating Back Bay waters produced such a sewerage problem that city health officials demanded the area be filled in the interest of the public welfare. In 1852, a special commission was

appointed by the state legislature to prepare a plan for the development of the Back Bay, and the filling operation began five years later. By 1880, the entire area now known as the Back Bay District was solid ground; by 1890, the fill extended beyond Kenmore Square and was continuing along Bay State Road. At its completion, the monmumental Back Bay project had added 450 acres of land to the City of Boston.

The design of the Back Bay District was very much influenced by the impressive Parisian boulevards of Second Empire France. Unlike earlier residential plans for Beacon Hill or the South End, the Back Bay was not divided into tree-lined squares but was conceived as a grand scheme of generously landscaped, parallel avenues. Commonwealth Avenue, designed as the dominant boulevard, provided a central linear park and connected the green open spaces of the Common and Public Garden with those of the Fenway system.

From its inception, the Back Bay was planned as both a major civic improvement and a substantial residential district. It soon attracted many of the city's leading families, and the handsome townhouses and splendid mansions that began to line the streets reflected the tastes of fashionable and affluent clientele. Despite many variations in architectural style, the Back Bay was distinguished by the general consistency of character, form and scale. This was strongly encouraged by the original far-sighted deed restrictions, which specified minimum building heights, generous setbacks on all major streets and masonry construction. Together with later limitations on building mass, these restrictions assured the development of a continuous street facade, regular cornice and mansard roof lines, and a repetitive pattern of projecting oriel and bay windows.

The residential development of the Back Bay reflects four distinct phases of Victorian architecture. During the late 1850's and 1860's, the cosmopolitan French style dominated readily identified by mansard roof and brownstone masonry. After 1870, various stylistic modifications produced a second period of Back Bay architecture characterized by an ornamental, freer treatment of French architectural detail and return to brick masonry. The Ruskin Gothic style also emerged during this period with its polychrome masonry, brickwork ornament, and medieval detailing described by steep gables, pointed arches and towerlike roof projections. By the late 1870's, Back Bay architecture entered a third phase, defined by two styles: Queen Anne, displaying brickwork plaques of foliate, floral or sunburst fancifully shaped dormer windows, stepped Dutch gables and numerous tall chimney stacks, and Romanesque Revival, characterized by broad masonry arches, roughly textured walls, slit-like openings, bundles of thick colonnettes and somber contrasts of red brick and rusticated brownstone. The final period of Victorian architecture in the Back Bay, dependent on meticulous references to earlier building styles -- including Italian Renaissance, English and American Georgian and French Chateauesque -- distinguishes its late nineteenth and early twentieth century construction.

The original restrictions against incompatible land uses, more recently replaced by zoning, have protected sizeable sections of the area against commercial encroachment. In 1966, the legislature established the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission, a design review board within the Boston Redevelopment Authority. All plans for new constructions, demolition, exterior rehabilitation and repair of existing buildings, and all proposals for new signs, awnings and other structural features must be submitted to the Commission for their consideration.

The successful experience of the new Commission in guiding and controlling exterior changes in the Back Bay led to further action to extend the District to cover the adjoining commercial blocks of Newbury and Boylston Streets from Dartmouth Street to Massachusetts Avenue. In 1974 the City Council and the legislature amended the original act to change the name of the area involved to the Back Bay Architectural District and to enlarge the District as mentioned (see map). Since the enlargement of the area of the Commission's jurisdiction, a majority of its formal decisions have related to changes on Newbury and Boylston Street buildings.

Concurrent with establishment of the Back Bay Residential District and Architectural Commission was the ground-breaking for the Prudential Center. In April 1965, the redevelopment of the former railroad and lumber yard began. This private effort by the Prudential Insurance Company resulted in the construction of 781 apartment units, a shopping mall of 30 stores and 1,534,289 square feet of office space located in two towers, the tallest of which is 52 stories.

B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report is derived from the United States Census. The data is available on a subarea basis which does not conform in all cases to the neighborhood boundaries. A certain amount of approximation, therefore, is involved in the data. Additionally, the data does not reflect demographic changes which might have taken place since 1969, when the Census was taken.

Two subareas have been delineated for the purpose of analysis in this report: Back Bay and Beacon Hill. They are separated from each other by the Boston Common and Public Garden. Back Bay includes the Prudential Center, an area of major new residential, office and commercial construction. The Beacon Hill subarea contains the Hill and also the former West End neighborhood, which extends from the north side of Cambridge Street to Leverett Circle and Lowell Street and includes the Charles River Park development and a number of major hospitals (Massachusetts General, Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Shriner Burns).

BACK BAY-BEACON HILL DISTRICT

The 1970 census estimated the total population of the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District at 31,874 persons, an increase of 7% from 1960, while that of Boston decreased by 7% in the 1960's. It is a very densely populated area, with figures of 43 people per acre and 25 housing units per square acre contrasting with 20 and 7, respectively, for the city. Since 1950, these density figures have been steadily increasing while those of Boston have declined. Back Bay-Beacon Hill's population is dominated by persons aged 15 to 35, who make up 60% of the residents, versus 35% for the city. Mobility is high: only 24% of the district population had been in the same unit five years or more in 1970, in contrast to 50% citywide. The proportion of all other age groups has declined from 1960 to 1970, with a particularly large loss (-27%) in the elderly population. Median incomes for families and for individuals are higher than city figures. Only 13% of the 3,959 families earn under $5,000, versus 22% for the city.

There are 17,406 dwelling units in the district. Whereas about one third of the city's housing stock is in each of the 3-4 and 5-9 unit structures categories, two thirds of the housing in Back Bay-Beacon Hill is in 5-49 unit structures. The housing in Back Bay-Beacon Hill is older than the city's, with 80% built before 1940 versus 77% for the city. Most of the newer construction is in the Charles River Park and Prudential Center complexes, where all of the units are in structures of 50 units or more.

Most of the district's units (88%) are rented, while 5% are owner-occupied and 7% are vacant. The majority (73%) of the housing is occupied by one-person households. Fourteen percent of the population live in group quarters, a figure about three times the citywide average.

BACK BAY

The population of the Back Bay is predominantly young adults and students. In recent years there has been an influx of families with children, and with the consolidation of many of the small schools, the college-age population has leveled off and possibly even decreased. Nonetheless, over two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35, versus 34% citywide, and the proportion of that age group increased from 1960 to 1970. Although the total population grew by 10% to 18,267, the percentages of all other age groups declined, most notably the elderly (-27%). Mobility in Back Bay is high, with only 12% of 1970 Census respondents having lived in the same units five years or longer, versus 50% for the city. The student influence is clear, with almost one-fourth of the population in group quarters. Median incomes for families and individuals are higher than Boston figures. Some 15% of the 1877 families, however, earn less tan $5,000 per year.

Housing in the Back Bay is predominantly a mix of quality apartment buildings, lodging houses and dormitories. To this supply was added in the late 1960's 781 luxury apartments in the Prudential Center complex. The recent growth in the conversion of apartments to condominiums took place after the 1970 Census, which shows owner occupancy at only 1%. By far the majority of Back Bay residents continue to be renters, nonetheless. The vacancy rate of 8% exceeded the city average of 6%. Over 85% of the non-group units are occupied by only one person, in contrast with 30% for the city. It is estimated that 28% of the subarea's housing stock needs repairs of over $1,000.

BEACON HILL

The population of the Beacon Hill subarea is a diverse one, with a high concentration of young working people and with most of the district's elderly residents. Demographics are generally more similar to those of the city as a whole than are those of the rest of the district, with no single age group dominating the statistics. The total number declined slightly (-2%) to 13,607 in 1970, with the proportion of elderly and children aged 0-14 also decreasing. Although most residents are unrelated individuals, there are proportionately far more families in this subarea than in Back Bay. Mobility, however, is still high, with 26% of the residents having lived in their same units five years or more, in contrast with 50% citywide. Both family and individual median incomes are considerably higher in Beacon Hill than in Boston overall, though the figures indicate that the area is less affluent than the Back Bay. Approximately 12% of the 2,082 families in the subarea earn under $5,000 a year.

The housing stock on Beacon Hill consists of attached three- and four-story brick rowhouses in good or fair condition. Most have been converted to apartments. Vacancy rates parallel those of the city, but owner occupancy is only 8% (versus the Boston figure of 26%) and 86% of the units are renter-occupied. Group quarterings,

at 3%, is less prevalent than in the rest of the district and even slightly below the city wide figure. The percentage of units occupied by only one person is almost twice that of the city's. Approximately one-fourth of the dwelling units need substantial repairs, and these are generally on the north slope of the Hill.

The Charles River Park area adjacent to the Hill provides a contrast to the preceding description and accounts for an increase in the subarea's housing stock since 1950. Formerly the West End, the area contains 1,576 recently constructed housing rental units, including 1,426 in six luxury apartment towers and 150 units of elderly housing. Future housing development on this site is expected to consist of two additional apartment towers (710 units) and moderate-income housing on the Blackstone School site (176 units).

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - BACK BAY-BEACON HILL

1970 U.S. Census Data

Population	Beacon Hill	Back Bay	District	City
Total 1970	13,607	18.267	31,874	639,803
Change from '60	-2%	+10%	+7%	-7%
Total Black 1970	279	478	757	104,429
% of Total	2%	3%	+2%	16%
Change from '60	+68%	+158%	+116%	+65%
Aged 15-24 years	3,657	8,843	12,500	137,858
% of Total	27%	48%	40%	22%
Change from '60	+41%	+42%	+42%	+36%
Aged 25-34 years	2,783	3,564	6,347	79,210
% of Total	20%	20%	20%	12%
Change from '60	+13%	+12%	+12%	-9%
Aged 65 yrs. & Over	1,435	1,907	3,342	81,437
% of Total	11%	21%	11%	13%
Change from '60	-35%	-19%	-27%	-4%
Families	2,082	1,877	3,959	142,019
Income				
Median Family	$10,908-18,574	$ 9,584-19,106	$ 9,584-19,106	$ 9,133
Median Individual	$ 4,524-5,645	$ 3,360-7,023	$ 3,360-7,023	$ 2,819
% Families under $5,000	12%	13%	15%	22%
Housing				
Total Dwelling Units	7,891	9,515	17,406	232,400
Owner Occupied Units	613	362	850	59,178
%	8%	1%	5%	26%
Renter Occupied Units	6,810	8,410	15,522	158,257
%	86%	88%	88%	68%
Vacant Units	468	743	211	14,966
%	6%	8%	7%	6%
% 1-9 Unit Owner Occupied Structures	27%	10%	24%	54%

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - BACK BAY - BEACON HILL

1970 U.S. Census Data

Housing	Beacon Hill	Back Bay	District	City
Persons in Group Quarters	416	4,157	4,573	28,658
%	3%	23%	14%	5%
Non-Group Units with One Person	4,685	7,429	12,114	69,939
%	59%	85%	73%	30%
Person in Same Unit 5+ Years	2,050	2,154	4,204	294,797
%	26%	12%	24%	50%
Units Needing Fix-up in Excess of $1,000	1,588	2,445	4,033	67,104
%	23%	28%	26%	29%
Market Condition	Rising	Rising	Rising	Stable
Person per acre	———	———	43	20
Units per acre	———	———	25	7

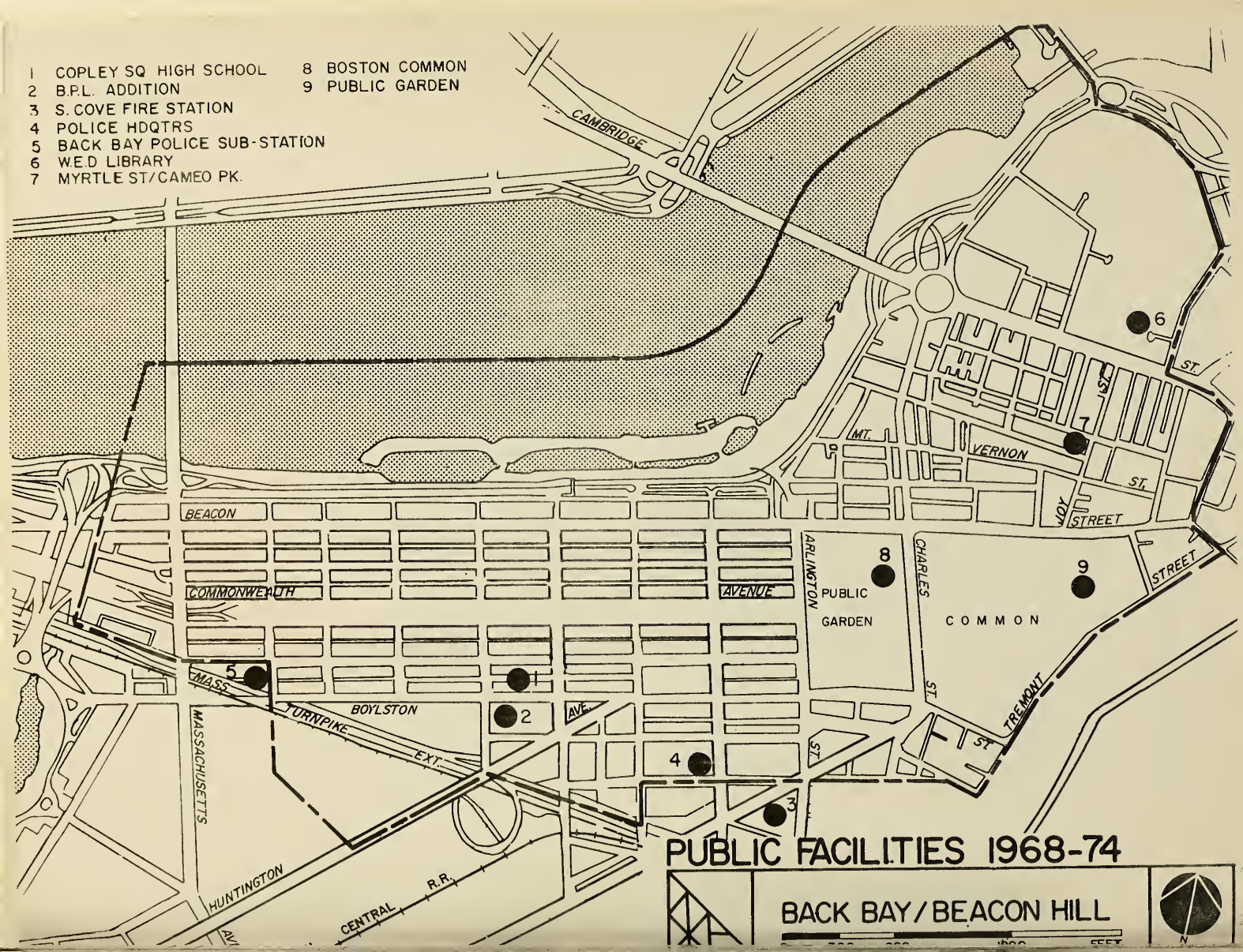
C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

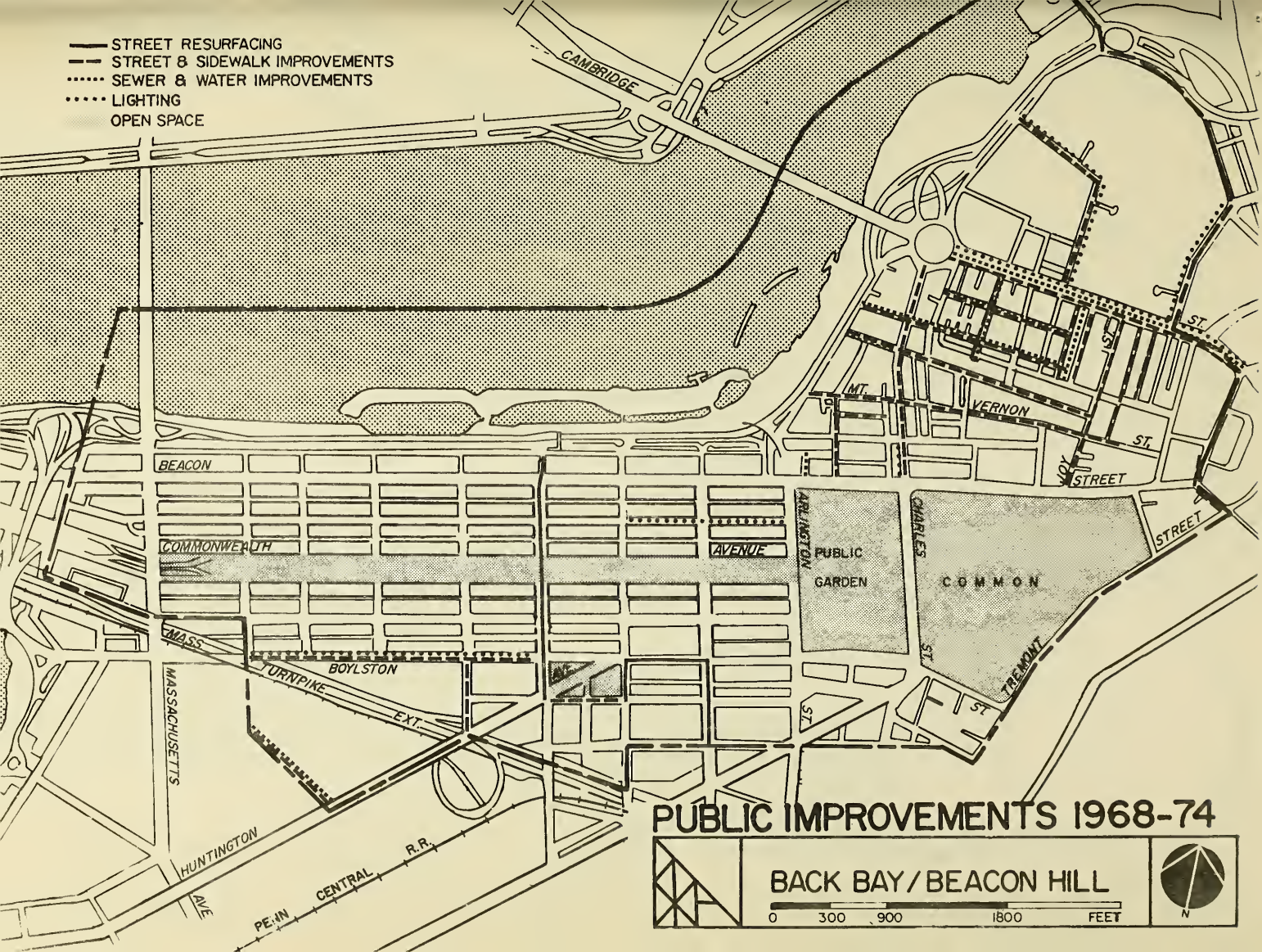
Capital expenditures in the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District totaled $7,472,065 from 1968 to 1974 exclusive of the major investment in lighting and one public library addition which was $24,000,000. These monies went to the maintenance of the Boston Common (including construction of a children's play area) and the Public Garden, the reconstruction of several major thoroughfares (Cambridge, Boylston and Charles Streets) and improvements to the Copley Square area, including the renovation of the Copley Square high school and the Police Headquarters, the reconstruction of Copley Square Park and the library enlargement.

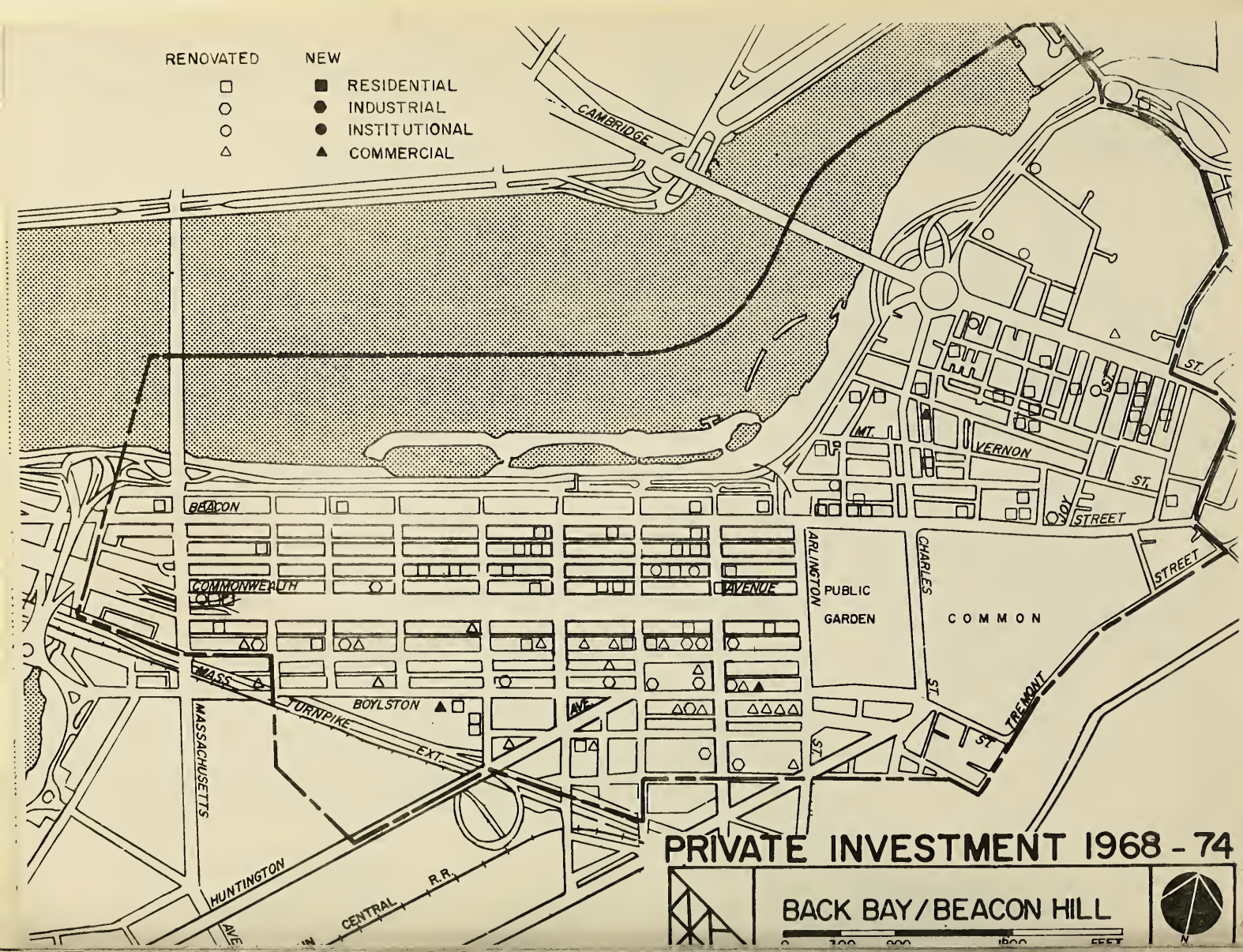
The bulk of expenditures for neighborhood amenities were for the renovation and construction of open spaces and street lighting. In addition to improvements to the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, a new mall was constructed on Dartmouth Street to serve Back Bay residents. Gaslights were installed along a portion of Marlborough Street. The Myrtle Street Cameo Park, one of a few open spaces on Beacon Hill, was rehabilitated. The residential streets and sidewalks of Beacon Hill were also substantially improved with the addition of gaslights, new sidewalks and trees as were the streets adjoining the Common and Public Garden. In addition, Beacon Hill and Charles River Park residents have benefited from the improvements to the West End Library and an $18 million investment (2/3 Federal, 1/3 city) in the West End Renewal project.

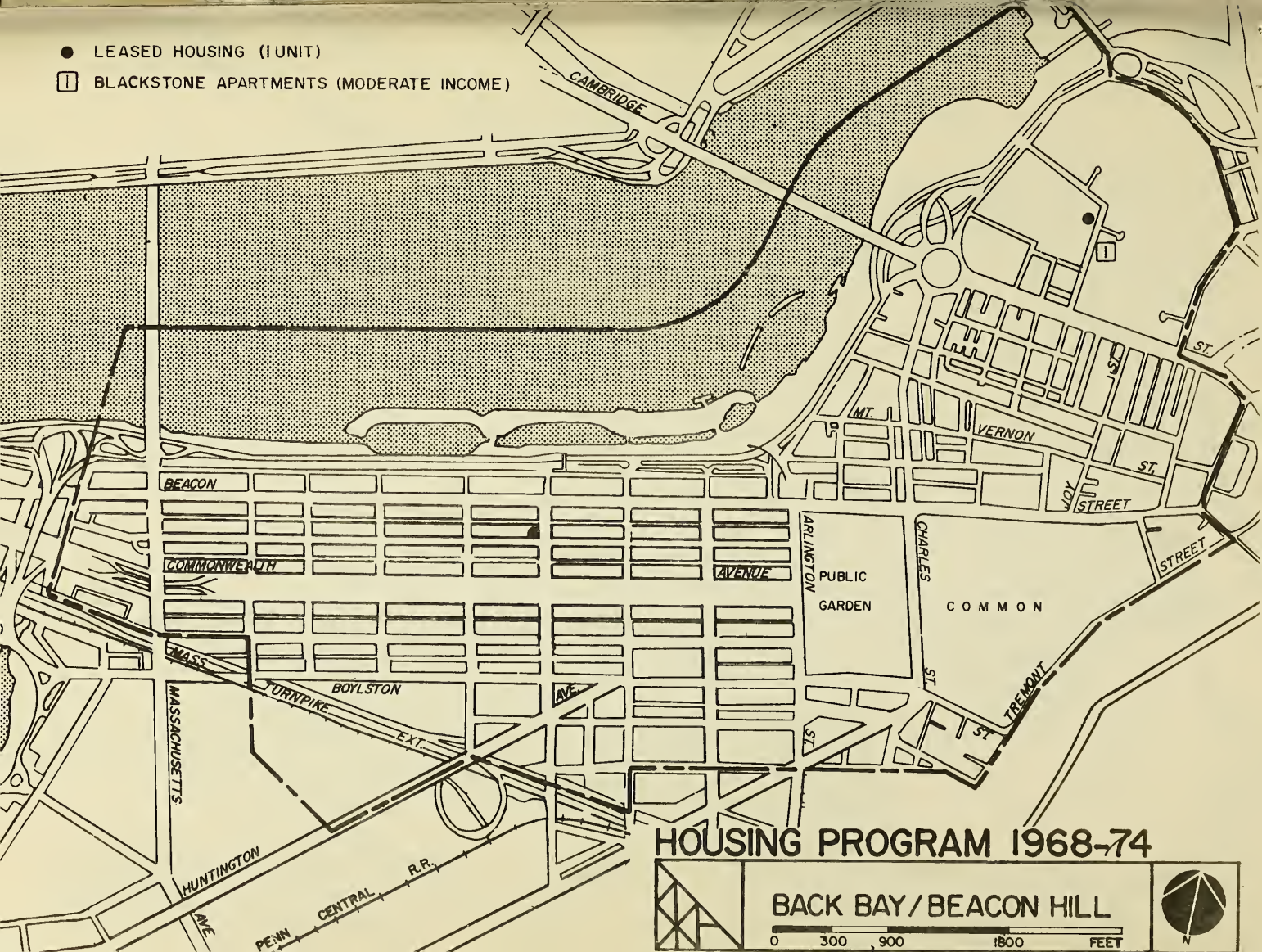
PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

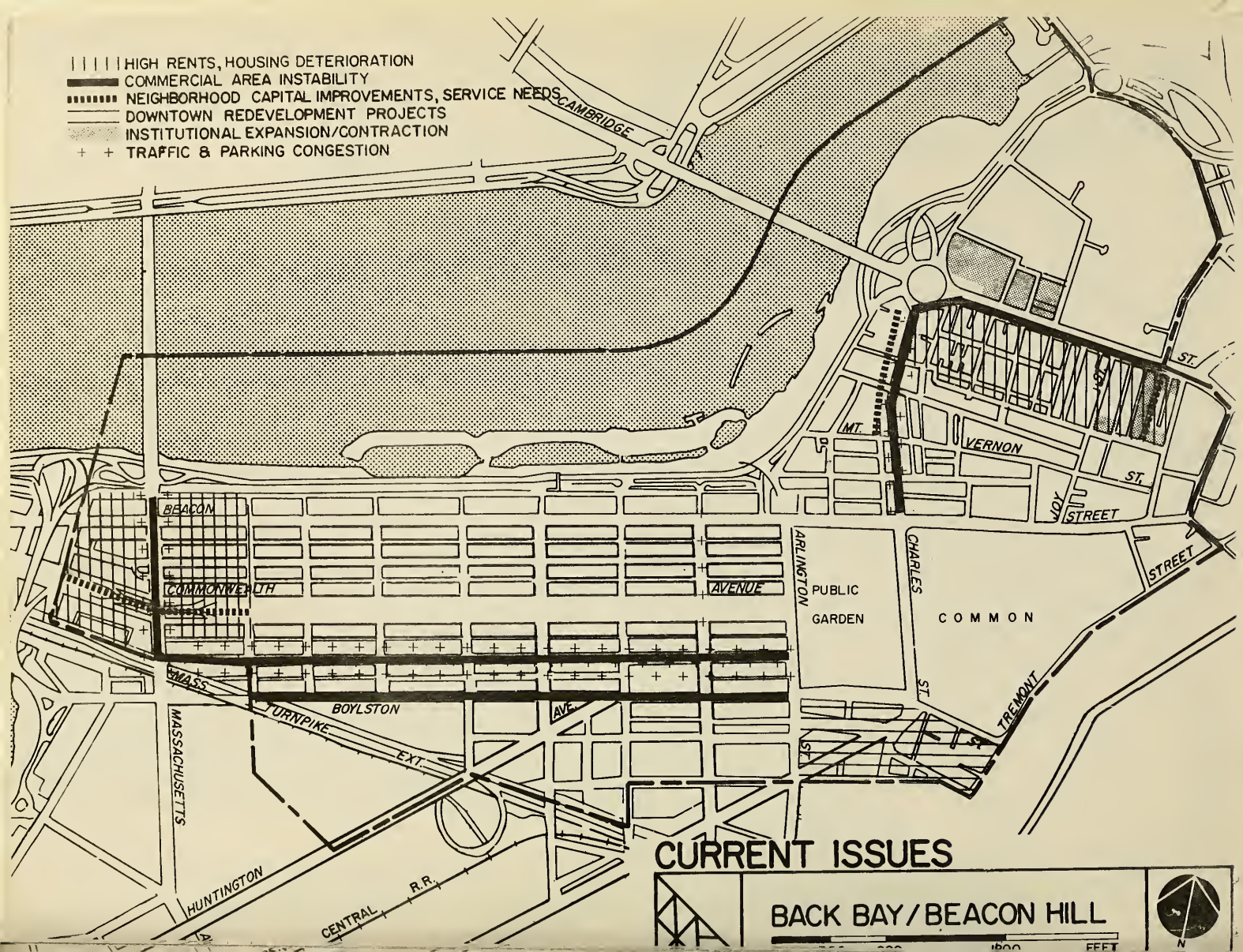
A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of $10,000 from 1968 to 1974 shows that there has been residential, office, institutional and commercial investment, mostly in the form of rehabilitation. The largest expenditures were for office and residential use. Overall, in terms of permits issued, the greatest volume of work was in the residential rehabilitation (about one half of the permits issued). This work was concentrated for the most part in the north slope of Beacon Hill and in the eastern end of Back Bay. Institutional investment was concentrated in the West End, and most retail and office investment took place along Boylston Street.


1 COPLEY SQ HIGH SCHOOL
2 B.P.L. ADDITION
3 S. COVE FIRE STATION
4 POLICE HDQTRS
5 BACK BAY POLICE SUB-STATION
6 W.E.D LIBRARY
7 MYRTLE ST/CAMEO PK.
8 BOSTON COMMON
9 PUBLIC GARDEN
CAMBRIDGE
BEACON
COMMONWEALTH
AVENUE
MASS.
TURNPIKE
BOYLSTON
EXT.
MASSACHUSETTS
HUNTINGTON
AVE.
CENTRAL
R.R.
MT.
VERNON
ST.
JOY
STREET
ARLINGTON
CHARLES
PUBLIC
GARDEN
COMMON
TREMONT
PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
N


STREET RESURFACING
STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
SEWER & WATER IMPROVEMENTS
LIGHTING
OPEN SPACE
CAMBRIDGE
MT. VERNON ST.
BEACON STREET
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
ARLINGTON ST.
PUBLIC GARDEN
CHARLES ST.
COMMON
TREMONT STREET
MASS. TURNPIKE EXT.
BOYLSTON
MASSACHUSETTS AVE.
HUNTINGTON
PENN CENTRAL R.R.
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
0 300 900 1800 FEET
N


RENOVATED
NEW
RESIDENTIAL
INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTIONAL
COMMERCIAL
CAMBRIDGE
BEACON
COMMONWEALTH
AVENUE
MASS.
TURNPIKE
EXT.
BOYLSTON
MASSACHUSETTS
HUNTINGTON
AVE.
CENTRAL
R.R.
MT.
VERNON
ST.
STREET
ARLINGTON
PUBLIC
GARDEN
CHARLES
COMMON
TREMONT
PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968 - 74
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
FEET
N


● LEASED HOUSING (1 UNIT)
[1] BLACKSTONE APARTMENTS (MODERATE INCOME)
CAMBRIDGE
ST.
MT. VERNON STREET
BEACON
COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
ARLINGTON ST.
PUBLIC GARDEN
CHARLES ST.
COMMON
TREMONT STREET
MASS. TURNPIKE EXT.
BOYLSTON ST.
MASSACHUSETTS AVE.
HUNTINGTON AVE.
PENN CENTRAL R.R.
HOUSING PROGRAM 1968-74
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
0 300 900 1800 FEET
N


HIGH RENTS, HOUSING DETERIORATION
COMMERCIAL AREA INSTABILITY
NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, SERVICE NEEDS
DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION/CONTRACTION
TRAFFIC & PARKING CONGESTION
CAMBRIDGE
ST.
MT.
VERNON
ST.
JOY
STREET
BEACON
COMMONWEALTH
AVENUE
ARLINGTON
PUBLIC
GARDEN
CHARLES
COMMON
STREET
MASS.
TURNPIKE
EXT.
BOYLSTON
AVE.
ST.
TREMONT
ST.
MASSACHUSETTS
HUNTINGTON
CENTRAL
R.R.
CURRENT ISSUES
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
FEET
N

D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

Currently two general problems face the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District: (1) how to continue to conserve historic residential neighborhoods in the downtown with the pressures of traffic flow, development and commercial area decline on the fringes of the neighborhoods, and (2) how to maintain a balance of population in these neighborhoods, including young and old, low-to-moderate-income families as well as single persons, owners and renters. The ramifications of these concerns are expressed by the following analysis of issues which affect the neighborhood.

1. HIGH RENTS, HOUSING DETERIORATION

Issue

Rents in Back Bay-Beacon Hill are the highest of any district in the city. Where the dwelling units are in sound condition, these costs are justified. But where, on the other hand, there has been minimal investment in upgrading the dwelling units and where the tenants are of low or moderate income, this condition is often accompanied by deterioration and, a high rate of apartment turnover.

In both Back Bay and Beacon Hill, more than 75% of the low-income tenants and 25% of the moderate-income tenants pay in excess of 35% of their incomes for rent, in contrast to 68% and only 9% respectively for the city. This situation is compounded in areas where building conditions are poor such as along Massachusetts Avenue and the north slope of Beacon Hill. The city's Housing Inspection Department estimates that more than 25% of the dwelling units in Back Bay (2189) and 20% of the units in Beacon Hill (1287) require in excess of $1000 to bring them up to code standards.

A significant amount of the housing deterioration in the district can be attributed to group quartering and lodging houses. There are approximately 100 dormitories and 180 rooming houses in the Back Bay. On the north slope of Beacon Hill, there are approximately 20 rooming houses. The 1970 Census indicated critical overcrowding throughout the Back Bay, a problem associated with dormitories and rooming houses. Additionally, while rooming houses generate a significant cash flow, there are no special efforts being made to see that they are properly maintained. As a consequence, this housing stock is in generally poorer condition than the owner occupied or apartment stock. A further problem is that a number of lodging houses are operating without either licenses or a valid occupancy permit from the building department. In the Massachusetts Avenue section along, it has been informally estimated by the B.R.A. that there are approximately 25 illegal lodging houses.

Strategy

A study of lodging houses and dormitories should be instituted to determine the scope of the problem. The north slope and Massachusetts Avenue subareas are priority locations. This study should evaluate the extent of building deterioration and to the degree to which this condition correlates with lodging house and dormitory occupancy program strategies dealing with the occupancy and condition problems should then be prepared accompanied by additional efforts to encourage the preservation of historic buildings which are not easily renovated and to ensure a balance of age groups, owners and renters should also be undertaken. Such strategies would include the use of leased housing, expansion of the Housing Improvement Program and, if needed, changes in assessment and rent control policies to encourage more rehabilitation, owner occupancy and varied rent levels.

2. COMMERCIAL AREA INSTABILITY

Issue

The two new commercial developments in Back Bay-Beacon Hill, Charles River Plaza and the Prudential Center Shopping Plaza, offer a good mix of stores, security and parking and have become the major shopping areas for residents. On the other hand, the older retail districts -- Massachusetts Avenue, Boylston, Newbury, Charles and Cambridge Streets -- lack such assets and have, in fact, been adversely impacted by the development of the new areas.

Restaurants are the predominant use on Boylston and Cambridge Streets. Litter, garish signs, traffic congestion and heavy transient pedestrian use result. An increase of restaurants particularly with liquor licenses, is likewise becoming a major issue on Newbury and Charles Streets. A related problem is the mix of businesses. While each area is somewhat unique, all suffer from the difficulty of preserving a viable mix of businesses which balance the needs of local residents with that of the tourist and transient population. Other problems which affect the older retail districts to varying degrees are the lack of promotional activities and environmental amenities; signs, raised sidewalks, inadequate enforcement of parking, sign and dog control regulations. These problems are particularly acute along Massachusetts Avenue.

Strategy

A coordinated private/public capital investment program has been underway for some years. The city has made significant environmental improvements (lights, sidewalks, trees) along Boylston, Charles and Cambridge Streets. This public investment is just beginning to get underway on Newbury Street. Private investment to match these public efforts has varied

but is most obviously lacking on Charles Street. Cambridge Street, with the organization of the CSCDC, is the most significant private effort, geared to controlling development of this retail district. Similar efforts in Charles and Newbury Streets should be pursued.

It is imperative that a range of local and regional service and goods stores be provided. Promotional activities and a business development program would help improve the mix of businesses for all these retail districts.

Improved city services, the new foot patrol program, an increase in parking meter rates and concentrated sign control program for Boylston and Newbury Streets, have made a significant positive impact. Certain service and enforcement problems remain to be more clearly identified including dog control, parking enforcement and sanitation. These issues should be reviewed in all the retail areas and appropriate strategies developed. Efforts currently underway to up-grade the Massachusetts Avenue area should be continued.

A third strategy to upgrade these retail areas concerns regulation of activities and uses. Rooming houses, currently allowed in local and general business districts, might become a problem due to the softening of the office market on Newbury Street and the uneven retail climate on Charles Street. Since the potential exists for an increase in rooming houses, such a shift, if it does occur, should be closely monitored.
A second effort concerns traffic flow on Charles Street and on Newbury Street. The concept of a pedestrian mall in these locations, which are currently prone to congestion and double-parking, should be explored. Finally, liquor licenses in these retail districts has become a major concern in recent years. The granting of new or expanded licensing priviliges should be a matter of city and community review. Licenses must not be approved on Newbury or Charles Streets except after appropriate conditions are agreed to. On Cambridge and Boylston Streets, licensing likewise should be subject to conditions that assure they will not negatively impact the areas.

3. NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SERVICE NEEDS

Issue

The majority of capital improvement expenditures in the 1968-1974 period in the Back Bay-Beacon Hill area were related to citywide facilities, public facilities and major thoroughfare improvements. The balance of the expenditures were for neighborhood-oriented improvements, such as the Dartmouth Street Mall and Beacon Hill lighting and sidewalks. In 1975 this situation has been reversed, with significant investments committed or planned for parks, patch paving, tree planting

and lighting. These non-citywide activities, have had a positive and highly visible impact on the district at a minimal cost to the city. Additional expenditures detailed below are of concern to the neighborhoods.

Strategy

In order to continue the beneficial multiplier impacts of past city investment, high-priority capital improvement and for service expenditures are needed immediately. Four basic purposes will be achieved by this investment. First, activities now underway for which commitments have been made would be completed, namely, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Temple Street Mall. Second, additional improvements will be provided at modest expense to the city to tie in with the private investment now underway: environmental improvements on Charles Street and Newbury Street. Third, as a result of deferred maintenance, other activities should be implemented: patch paving, purchase of alley-cleaning equipment, street resurfacing. Fourth, certain city services needs require additional attention including sanitation and dog control.

4. DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT IMPACTS

Issue

Two large-scale redevelopment projects, Park Plaza and Jordan Marsh/Lafayette Place, are planned for the downtown. These projects, because of their location, scale, density and mix of uses, will have an impact on Back Bay and Beacon Hill.

Of priority concern is the increased traffic in the neighborhoods as a result of the widening and realignment of Charles Street and the creation of a pedestrian mall on Washington Street.

Second, relocation especially within the Park Plaza project, of commercial uses will have various impacts. While certain desirable uses, such as piano sales, might move in to existing retail areas, the potential relocation of various "combat zone" uses would be undesirable. Fortunately, entertainment establishments are now conditional uses along Boylston and Newbury Streets and forbidden along Charles Street. Additional establishments, such as car rental agencies, are of service to the residents as well as visitors, and their relocation out of the community would have a negative impact.

A third concern is the effect of the new developments will have on the Common and Garden. These are the only major city-owned open space areas downtown, and they are presently utilized to capacity for both active (tennis courts, baseball diamonds) and passive (sitting and walking area) use. Additional development increases the demand for these areas beyond reasonable limits.

Aesthetic considerations are a fourth major issue. Redevelopment activity will alter the skyline. The south slope of Beacon Hill, in particular, will be affected by the change in profile. Shadow, wind and micro-climate impacts are additional environmental considerations.

Lastly, of major concern is the degree to which these projects will affect the price of residential and commercial space. If the market area is broadened sufficiently and marketed sensitively, the overall effect on the community could be a positive result in stable or even lower vacancy rates. However, if the new development competes directly with existing dwelling units and stores, it could have a negative impact on the existing communities, increasing vacancies and encouraging lower paying uses.

Strategy

The Park Plaza Civic Advisory Committee offers a useful forum for the Back Bay-Beacon Hill neighborhoods to represent their concerns over the potential impact of the Park Plaza project. These impacts are now the subject of analysis by the consultants preparing the Park Plaza Environmental Impact Statement. The report will be reviewed with the CAC and the community at large.

5. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION/CONTRACTION

Issue

A major issue affecting the residential quality of both Back Bay and Beacon Hill has been the impact of institutional expansion. In Beacon Hill, two major institutions, Suffolk University and the Massachusetts General Hospital, have been the major sources of friction. Suffolk University is located within Beacon Hill and the growth of this school has had a direct impact on the residential quality of the north slope. The acquisition of property with residential potential, the impact of students, noise, parking and traffic congestion are obvious. MGH, on the other hand, is situated in the periphery of Beacon Hill. The spillover effects of the hospital, while less than Suffolk University, likewise detract from the residential quality of Beacon Hill. In addition, of current concern is the possible plan to relocate the Charles Street jail thus making available a prime parcel for rehabilitation or redevelopment.

Institutional expansion in the Back Bay has been much more pervasive. The Back Bay, was developed as a luxury family residential area. As a result, the buildings were very spacious. With the Depression and a shift in life styles, it became increasingly difficult for families to maintain their structures; many were subdivided into apartments or utilized as rooming houses. This trend accelerated after World War II

and was accompanied by the use of these residences by various institutions, junior colleges, finishing schools, colleges as dormitories, classrooms and administrative offices. By the 1960's there were some 111 institutions (75% were educational) occupying all or portions of 184 buildings in the Back Bay. As the area was rapidly innudated with a transient population, students, young people and cars, the quality of the family residential environment eroded.

Several factors soon reversed this trend. A zoning amendment was passed in 1970 which made educational institutions conditional uses. Second, a zoning map amendment was adopted in 1971 which reduced the height limit to conform to the existing density. The pressure for speculation and redevelopment by educational institutions was diffused. Accompanying these changes was the growth in the condominium market: properties were subdivided, or existing apartments were converted into owner-occupied units.

The most important and most recent factor which checked the growth of educational institutions and assisted in the revitalization of the family residential environment has been the decline in the enrollments at most private educational institutions in the 1970's. This has forced two schools to close and seven to consolidate their holdings. As of 1975, there were some 30 educational institutional properties, mostly dormitories, for sale. The problem of educational institutions in Back Bay has thus shifted in focus: rather than checking continued growth, the issue has become one of monitoring the process of consolidations. The growth, on the other hand, of other types of institutions -- half-way houses for run-away teenagers, for example, and locations used by religious sects -- has provided an additional challenge in the neighborhood's attempts to preserve its residential quality.

Strategy

Strategies to deal with institutional expansion differ within each neighborhood. In Beacon Hill the problem is more coherent. The formation of the CSCDC, which includes MGH, Suffolk University and the Beacon Hill Civic Association, has enabled the institutions and residential community to prepare a general concept plan to guide future change. Within the context of the goals of this plan, the various parties are beginning to outline on a parcel-by-parcel basis an agreed upon redevelopment program. Efforts currently are being directed at implementing a residential reuse of parcel 4-A and planning for the reuse of parcel 4-B, the former Stop & Shop property and the Charles Street Jail site.

In the Back Bay, a similar strategy might be required in the future. Efforts currently are being channeled into monitoring and affecting where necessary the shifts in institutional ownership and use. Institutional properties which are for sale are recorded by the Back Bay Federation. A joint effort on the part of the BRA and the Federation consists of monitoring these buildings on the market to ensure that the re-use is appropriate and to provide technical assistance, where possible and desirable the conversion to residential use is ecnouraged. An additional strategy which is used to monitor these changes in institutional property is the Board of Appeals since educational institutions, dormitories, half-way houses now are conditional uses in the Back Bay. The BRA, the Federation and the neighborhood must coordinate their efforts in reviewing these changes.

6. TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND PARKING INADEQUACY

Issue

Beacon Hill and Back Bay, as residential neighborhoods in the downtown, share the goal of diverting through-traffic destined for the CBD from their neighborhoods. Beacon Hill has been working to confine through traffic to the peripheral streets of Cambridge, Bowdoin, Beacon and Charles; Back Bay has tried to keep through traffic on Storrow Drive, the Massachusetts Turnpike and Boylston Street.

Since these are high-density downtown neighborhoods, car ownership is lower than for the city as a whole. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Census, 58% of Back Bay-Beacon Hill households had no cars in 1970, as opposed to 47% citywide. In the district, 43% of all workers walk to work and only 19% drive, contrasted with city figures of 15% walkers and 35% drivers.

Parking is nevertheless a continual problem because of the use of the local streets by commuters and shoppers, as well as residential cars. Illegally parked vehicles, especially on Beacon Hill, make emergency access and street cleaning a problem. Off-street parking in both areas is expensive and not convenient enough to an attractive alternative for residents, although the Boston Common, Massachusetts General Hospital and Prudential Center garages are used by some residents for monthly parking.

Strategy

The traffic problems on Beacon Hill can be attacked on two major fronts. In the State House area, a study of circulation changes on Bowdoin, Somerset and Ashburton Streets is needed to determine ways of keeping traffic off interior streets.

Second, further study of the closing of Myrtle Street between Irving and South Russell Streets is necessary to prevent traffic from Storrow Drive crossing the hill on Revere, Myrtle and Joy Streets.

A mini-bus service for Beacon Hill has been studied involving the MGH, Government Center and Boston Common garages; in a second phase, this service would be expanded to include Back Bay. Implementation of these routes has been long in coming; thorough evaluation of the reasons for delay are necessary measures.

The parking strategy for Beacon Hill requires making off-street parking more accessible to residents and visitors, confining on-street parking to legal areas. The Beacon Hill Civic Association has made an effort to inform residents of the necessity of keeping corners and fire lanes free of parked cars. Signs are needed at some corners, and continued enforcement and towing are essential. Some new parking can be opened up on certain Beacon Hill Streets which are wide enough to accomodate parking on one side. Further, with the new State House garage, on-street parking reserved for legislators could be removed. A thorough study of parking regulatons on the Hill is, therefore, in order.

In the Back Bay, the traffic strategies involve further definition of residential streets and better expressway access. A partial Newbury Street closing should be explored or tested to determine whether a pedestrian mall should be created. Although Newbury Street is not a major traffic carrier, it is important for service access and parking. The possibility of neckdowns at intersections on Marlborough Street should also be studied to further define its residential nature, and access to Storrow Drive at Arlington Street should be explored to see if alignment changes to alleviate the congestion would be feasible.

A new mini-bus route may be initiated in September 1975 to serve restaurants in the Back Bay and the Prudential garage. If this short route proves successful, the service could be expanded to connect stores and residences with the Prudential, Hancock, the St. James and Common garages.

Where possible, new development and rehabilitation of older buildings should provide off-street parking. The Back Bay Task Force recommended in 1970 the ration of one parking space to one dwelling unit for new construction and one space for every two units of rehabilitated units in buildings over three units. Such a change in the zoning ordinance should be studied, along with alternative plans for bus service to existing garages, possibly sponsored by developers of new buildings.

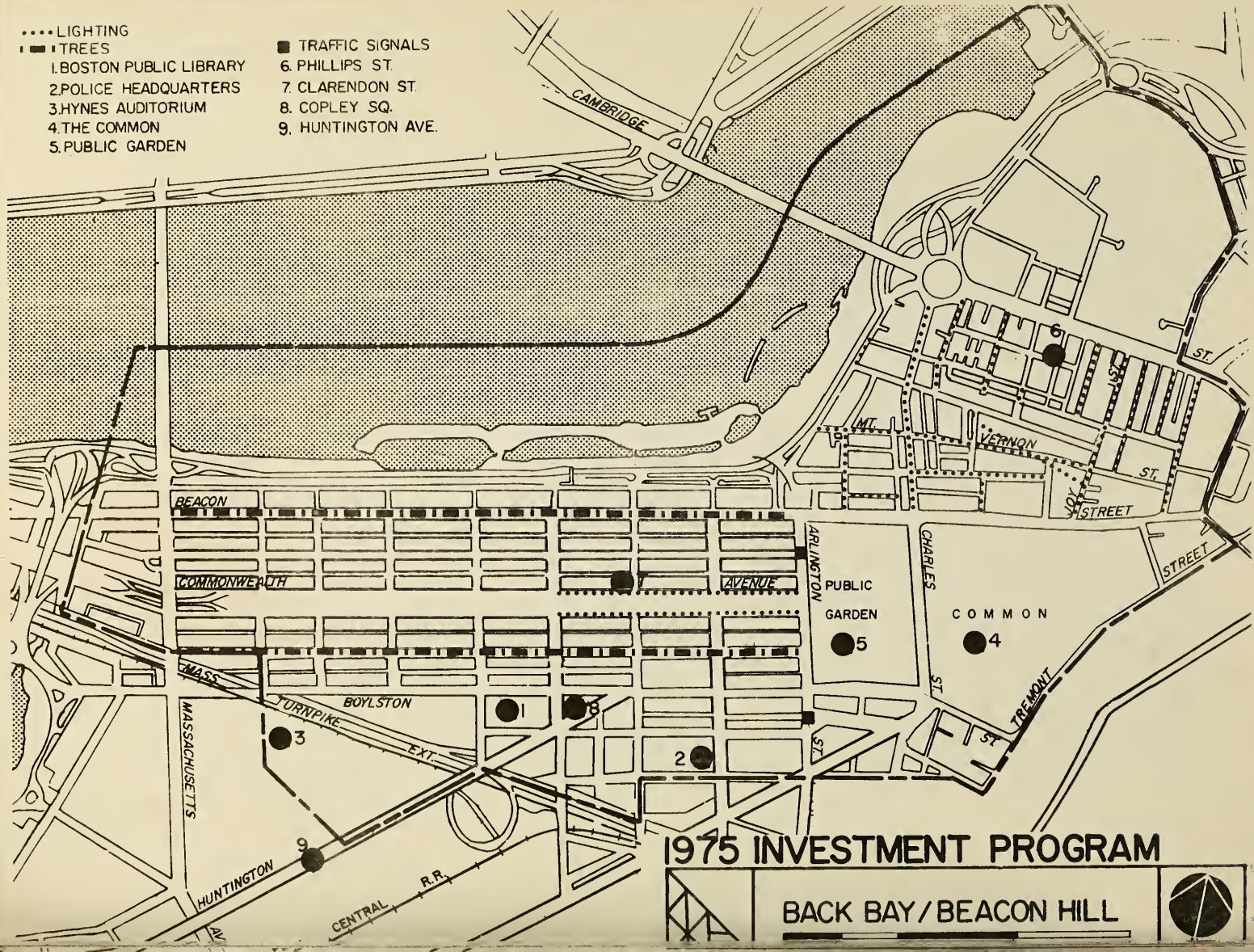
E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program focuses on environmental park and lighting improvements. Of the $4,765,000 which will be spent in addition to $4,000,000 for Huntington Avenue, 50% is allocated to parks. This sum includes monies for renovating the Boston Common (reconstruction of Parkman Plaza and Fountain, McArthur Mall and Brewer Fountain, construction of plazas such as S & S Monument, installation of decorative fencing, reconstructing of walks, tree planting), the Public Garden (restoration of decorative fence, main entrance gates, fountains, monument, walks and lawn, installation of decorative fencing and gates, construction of sitting area, lighting), the Phillips Street play area and Copley Square, in addition to acquisition of the Clarendon Street property. Other environmental improvements include tree planting, sidewalk patch paving and an informaton kiosk. The current lighting program includes the installation of special pedestrian lighting for Commonwealth Avenue (Arlington to Dartmouth Streets), and gaslights on Marlborough Street.

Housing preservation will be encouraged through the allocation of grant monies under the Housing Improvement Program for approximately 50 units.

Other improvements while of regional importance will also be of benefit to Back Bay-Beacon Hill. These include the TOPICS program for Huntington Avenue and renovation of the Copley Square Library, Hynes Auditorium and the Police Headquarters.

In summation, the 1975 investment program represents a new and major commitment by the city to fund neighborhood oriented improvements in Back Bay-Beacon Hill. This investment should be continued in the areas outlined on the following section in future investment needs.


LIGHTING
TREES
1. BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
2. POLICE HEADQUARTERS
3. HYNES AUDITORIUM
4. THE COMMON
5. PUBLIC GARDEN
TRAFFIC SIGNALS
6. PHILLIPS ST.
7. CLARENDON ST.
8. COPLEY SQ.
9. HUNTINGTON AVE.
CAMBRIDGE
BEACON
COMMONWEALTH
AVENUE
MASS.
TURNPIKE
EXT.
BOYLSTON
MASSACHUSETTS
HUNTINGTON
CENTRAL
R.R.
ARLINGTON
PUBLIC
GARDEN
CHARLES
ST.
COMMON
TREMONT
STREET
MT.
VERNON
ST.
1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL

F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

Future investment needs include an expansion of the current efforts relating to parks, lighting, environment and housing, and the initiation of investment to resolve problems concerning traffic and parking, commercial area uncertainty, outdated water and sewer mains and social service deficiencies. These investment needs require further analysis in order to estimate scope, cost and priorities. The funding of this program, furthermore, will have to be for the most part from the city's capital budget since the income levels of Beacon Hill-Back Bay are outside the low-moderate range targeted for the Community Development Revenue Sharing Program.

Housing Improvement in future years will require additional monies from the HIP program. The use of Section 8 financing in order to encourage the rehabilitation of units for low- and moderate-income households and the initiation of a code enforcement program targeted initially at lodging houses ought to be evaluated.

New pedestrian street lighting is required for Newbury and possibly Beacon Street. Park improvements -- the Commonwealth Avenue Mall from Gloucester Street to Charlesgate East, and the Temple Street Mall project -- also should be undertaken.

With regard to traffic and parking issues, with the exception of acquiring mini-buses, additional analysis is required to determine what improvements can and should be funded.

Commercial areas -- Charles, Boylston and Newbury Streets and Massachusetts Avenue -- need various forms of investment such as facade upgrading and tree planing. These amenities require a comprehensive plan and a staged implementation program.

Social services and water and sewer needs have not as yet been identified. Studies should be conducted to establish the scope of work which is required.

FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
High Rents, Housing Deterioration	HIP	HIP - $75,000 (50 structures	HIP: minimum 100 units per year	
	Section 8 for rehabilitation and rental assistance to elderly and long term families		Section 8	
	Neighborhood Associations			
	Policy Planning			
Commercial Area Instability	Private efforts			
Newbury Street Massachusetts Ave.	Public efforts	$13,000 for patch paving 45 new trees	Facade rehab program, pedestrian lighting, tree stakes grates, trash containers	
Charles Street	Private efforts		Facade rehab program	
	Public Effort		Facade rehab program, Small Business Admin. Workshop	
Neighborhood Capital Improvements and Service Needs	Strengthen neighborhoods	Street Lighting for Beacon Hill, Commonwealth Ave, Marlboro St. ($315,000)	Newbury Street lighting, Beacon Street lighting.	
		Information kiosk ($6,000) Patch paving ($13,000) Tree planting ($13,000)	Patch paving, tree planting street resurfacing	
		Copley Square ($60,000) Boston Common ($1,500,000) Public Garden ($1,604,000)	Temple Street Mall Commonwealth Ave. Mall Street resurfacing	

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FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
		Philips St. Playground ($75,000) Boston Public Library ($400,000) Police Headquarters ($700,000) Hynes Auditorium ($350,000)	Water & sewer reconstruction CSCDC School Renovation	
	Improve city services		Expansion of dog control program, other services	
	New construction		New development	
Downtown Redevelopment Projects	Work with merchants, neighborhood associations, L.A.G.			
Institutional Expansion/Contraction	Work with CSCDC Work with Suffolk University		Unknown Unknown	
	Monitor changes in Back Bay		Section 8 rehabilitation funds, housing monies	
Traffic Congestion	Roadway improvements	Huntington Ave from Prudential Center to Massachusetts Ave. (4,000,000)		
	Signal improvements Circulation changes	City traffic signal, Arlington St. to St. James Ave. ($4,500)	Unknown	
	Public transportation Mini-bus		Mini-bus: Beacon Hill, Back Bay from under Common garage	
	Parking		Increase towing program	